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ABSTRACT

Shyness is a prevalent problem among grade school children, and several instruments for measuring shyness are being developed. Some of these assessment instruments include the Shyness Line, the Shyness Problem Line, and the Shyness Self Report, questionnaires focusing on children's feelings, thoughts and behaviors related to shyness. These questionnaires were used to help identify a cross-section of 98 shy fifth-grade students, and were readministered a week later. Results indicate that children consider shyness a personal "problem," and more than 60% of identified shy children would like to join a counseling group to help overcome shyness. Shyness was also found to correlate positively with low self-esteem. The Teachers Shyness Report, another measurement test, was given to 18 fifth-grade teachers to help identify shy students: all tests correlated positively. (Author/KMF)

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THE ASSESSMENT OF SHYNESS IN CHILDREN:
PRELIMINARY INSTRUMENTATION

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THE ASSESSMENT OF SHYNESS IN CHILDREN:

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In a needs assessment survey conducted by the author, shyness was found to be a personal problem among 46 percent of a sample of 400 fifth grade students in north central Florida (Lazarus, 1977). It was found that 35 percent of the children labeled themselves shy, while 59 percent reported that they would rather be less shy. Furthermore, 47 percent felt that they would like to join a group led by their school psychologist or school counselor that would help them be less shy. These findings suggest that school psychologists and counselors have not taken the problem of shyness seriously enough.

One of the difficulties related to the problems of shyness research has been the lack of adequate instrumentation to measure this construct. Consequently, instruments need to be devised to measure the construct of shyness. Therefore, the Shyness Self Report, the Teacher Shyness Report, the Shyness Line and the Shyness Problem Line were constructed. This paper discusses the development of these assessment instruments. The first section of this paper discusses the development of these instruments with a heterogeneous fifth grade population, while the second section discusses the use of these instruments with shy youngsters.

The Shyness Self Report is an 18 item questionnaire focusing on a child's feelings, thoughts and behaviors related to shyness. The Shyness Self Report was partially constructed from checklists of overt behaviors, cognitions and feelings of shy individuals (Zimbardo, Pilkonis and Norwood, 1975). The overt behaviors included silence, lack of eye contact, avoidance of others, avoidance of taking action and low speaking voice. Feelings included self-consciousness, concern for impressive management and negative self evaluation. The thoughts included cognitions related to over concern of social evaluation, thoughts about the unpleasantness of the situation and thoughts about shyness in general.

The particular questions were also derived from findings of Comfrey (1968), who factor analyzed total scores over collections of relatively homogeneous items and found shyness to be a trait characterized by different combinations of the following: seclusiveness, lack of social poise, avoidance of social contact, avoidance of social activities, loss of words, self consciousness, submissiveness, reserve, stage fright, inferiority and fear of public speaking.

The Shyness Self Report was initially constructed from psychological theory and presented to two faculty members at the University of Florida who have had at least one year of experience counseling children. It was also presented to a faculty member in clinical psychology who had particular expertise in personality assessment. It was also given to five elementary school counselors and school psychologists for suggestions regarding additions and deletions in regard to the universe of situations that would be applicable to a shy child in a school situation. From these data, the final Shyness Self Report was developed by the author.

The Shyness Self Report is constructed such that children circle one response that is most characteristic of how they think, feel or behave. The children circle a response on a five-point scale which includes the responses "Never, Almost Never", "Sometimes", "Often", and "Always". The instrument was constructed such that on some items the response "Always" was characteristic of a shy child, while on the remaining items the response "Never" was characteristic of a shy child.

The Shyness Self Report was given to eight judges who were doctoral candidates in the Department of Clinical Psychology, School Psychology or Counseling. These judges were told to circle either "Always" or "Never", depending upon a particular item. For purposes of scoring, the judges were told to answer the questions from the vantage point of a shy child. It was found that there was 100 percent agreement on all items among the evaluators as to the item responses that were characteristic of a shy child. On three questions either one or two judges chose the "Sometimes"

response, which indicated no directionality. Yet, on no question did the judges choose a response that was opposed to the theoretical direction chosen by the researcher.

The Measurement of Shyness With a Heterogeneous Fifth Grade Population

The Shyness Self Report was given to 52 fifth grade students at one elementary school in Alachua County, Florida. Low scores were judged to be characteristic of a shy child, while high scores were judged to be characteristic of a non-shy child. The two fifth grade teachers were asked to rank the children in their class from the most shy to the least shy according to ten specified criteria. The students were therefore given a rank order based on their Shyness Self Report scores and teacher rankings. It was found using a rank difference correlation of .52 based on one teacher's ranking and a correlation of .44 based on the other teacher's ranking.

Reliability

The Shyness Self Report was given to 52 fifth grade students and readministered one week later to the same group of students. The test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be .86.

Normative Data

The instrument was constructed such that a low score was indicative of a shy child. The score was determined by assigning a number to each item response. For example, in scoring the item, "Do you speak in class discussions?", one point was given for an answer of "Never", four points for an answer of "Almost Always". The lowest possible score would be 18, while the highest possible score would be 90.

The students were also asked on a separate page, "Do you think of yourself as a shy person?" Those students who answered "yes" were labeled the shy group and those students who answered "no" were labeled the non-shy group. Among 52 students the mean scores of the group that perceived themselves as non-shy was significantly higher than the means of the group that perceived themselves as shy at the .01 level of significance. The data was analyzed by the use of the t-test.

For the fifth grade students the mean score was 63.2 with a standard deviation of 6.9 and a range of 46 to 78. For those students who answered "yes" to the question, Do you think of yourself as a shy person?", the mean score was 60.3 with a standard deviation of 6.7 and a range of 46 to 70.

For those students who answered "no" to the above question, the mean score was 67.3 with a standard deviation of 6.6 and a range of 53 to 78.

Therefore, it can be seen that the shy group scores approximately one standard deviation below the mean of the non shy group. For preliminary research purposes children who score below 60 may be considered mildly shy, those youngsters scoring below 53 may be considered moderately shy, while those youngster scoring below 46 may be considered severely shy.

The Teacher Shyness Report

The Teacher Shyness Report is also an 18 item questionnaire developed by the researcher focusing on a child's behavior related to shyness. It is based on the same theoretical constructs as the Shyness Self Report and was developed in the same fashion. The majority of the items in the two reports are very similar and are based on the teacher's perspective. On the Teacher Shyness Report, the teacher based his or her responses on the observable behavior of the child.

The Teacher Shyness Report was given to four fifth grade teachers at an elementary school in Alachua County, Florida. The four teachers each evaluated four of the shyest children in their class. The same teachers re-evaluated the same children one week later, and the test-retest reliability on these 16 children was found to be .88.

The Shyness Line and the Shyness Problem Line

The Shyness Line is a nine-point scale where the child is asked to mark where he feels he belongs according to the question, "Are you a shy person?" A low score is indicative of a shy child and a high score indicative of a non-shy child.

The Shyness Problem Line is a nine-point scale where the child is asked to mark where he feels he belongs according to the question, "Is shyness a problem for you?" A low score is indicative of a large problem and a high score is indicative of little or no problem in this area.

On the Shyness Line the mean score was 5.5 with a standard deviation of 2.2 and a range of 1 to 9. On the Shyness Problem Line the mean score was 6.5 with a standard deviation of 2.6 and a range of 1 to 9.

The Measurement of Shyness With Shy Children

Shyness was assessed with fifth grade children who met two criteria. First, the child had to answer "yes" to the question, "Do you consider yourself a shy person?" Second, the child had to be ranked by the teacher within the 50th percentile of the class that was most shy according to ten criteria.

The ten criteria were:

- (1) Tends to withdraw from social contact.
- (2) Is timid in social situations.
- (3) Speaks in a low speaking voice.
- (4) Has difficulty expressing his or her opinions.
- (5) Usually fails to establish eye contact with others.
- (6) Is quiet in social situations.
- (7) Usually fails to stand up for his or her rights.
- (8) Is hesitant to speak in social situations.
- (9) Rarely volunteers to speak in class.
- (10) Appears self-conscious in social situations.

The children who were in classes for the educable mentally retarded, the emotionally disturbed, or the socially maladjusted were excluded from the study.

The children that were included in the study were from seven different elementary schools in two counties in north central Florida. The students were in both rural and urban neighborhoods, in both public and private schools, and included children from all the socioeconomic stratas.

A total of 98 fifth grade shy youngsters were assessed. These are the results:

TABLE 1

The Assessment of Fifth Grade Shy Youngsters

Instrument	Mean	Standard Deviation
Shyness Self Report	56.5	10.1
Teacher Shyness Report	48.3	13.1
Shyness Line	3.5	1.8
Shyness Problem Line	4.6	2.0

The assessment instruments were also correlated with each other and were also correlated with the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory. The results are in Table 2:

TABLE 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients

	SSR	SL	SPL	CSEI	TSR
SSR	1.00 p=0.001	0.45 p=0.001	0.51 p=0.001	0.63 p=0.001	0.15 p=0.162
SL	0.45 p=0.001	1.00 p=0.001	0.51 p=0.001	0.29 p=0.004	0.20 p=0.062
SPL	0.51 p=0.001	0.51 p=0.001	1.00 p=0.001	0.50 p=0.001	0.10 p=0.388
CSEI	0.63 p=0.001	0.29 p=0.004	0.50 p=0.001	1.00 p=0.001	0.14 p=0.214
TSR	0.15 p=0.162	0.20 p=0.062	0.10 p=0.338	0.14 p=0.214	1.00 p=0.001

It can be seen that all the self assessment inventories are significantly correlated with each other. Also, self esteem as measured by the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory is positively correlated (0.63) with shyness. Therefore, shyness is significantly associated with low self esteem. It also appears that the relationship between shyness and self esteem depends more upon shyness as perceived as a problem than shyness itself. It was found that the correlation between the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory and the Shyness Problem Line was 0.50, while the correlation between the Coopersmith and the Shyness Line was 0.29.

The Teacher Shyness Report and the Shyness Self Report correlated positively with all the self report measures, though the correlation was not significant at the .05 level. This includes the data from 18 different teachers that participated in the study.

CONCLUSION

Children that are shy consider shyness a personal "problem" and more than sixty percent of these shy children would like to join a counseling group to help themselves be less shy. In order to understand any efforts at psychological intervention, it is necessary to have instruments to measure the psychological construct of shyness.

These four instruments discussed are easily administered and scored. The items can be read by the child; with a non-reading child the teacher, counselor or school psychologist can read the items. The student can easily complete the self assessment instruments in less than ten minutes, and the teacher can complete the Teacher Shyness Report in five minutes. These preliminary instruments are the only ones currently available that have been used in assessing shyness in children. The author will welcome any efforts by researchers for further validation and normative information concerning these instruments.

- 8 -

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- Lazarus, P. An experimental treatment program on the amelioration of shyness in children. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, 1977.
- Zimbardo, P., Pilkonis, P., and Norwood, R. The social disease called shyness. Psychology Today, 1975, pages 69-72.

APPENDIX "A"

Name _____

SHYNESS SELF REPORT

Think about these and decide how you act and feel. Circle your answer.

1. If children are playing on the playground, and you want to play with them, do you go over and ask to play?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
2. If your teacher asks a question in class and you think you know the answer, do you raise your hand to answer?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
3. If the teacher needs a volunteer for a special task, how often do you volunteer?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
4. If someone cuts in front of you in line, do you try to hold your place?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
5. If children are talking at school, and you would like to join them, do you go over and talk?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
6. If a boy or girl takes something that belongs to you, do you try to stop him?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
7. If you want to speak to the teacher in private, do you go and speak to her?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
8. Do you speak in class discussions?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always
9. Do you feel shy with grown-ups?
Never Almost Never Sometimes Often Always

SHYNESS SELF REPORT (Continued)

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------|--------------|-----------|-------|--------|
| 10. | Do you feel shy with boys in your class? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 11. | Do you feel shy with your close friends? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 12. | Are you a leader with children your own age? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 13. | Do you feel shy with girls in your class? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 14. | Are you good at making new friends? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 15. | Do you look directly at someone when you speak to them? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 16. | Do you speak in a loud enough voice so everyone can hear you? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 17. | Are you quiet with other children when you would rather be speaking? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 18. | When you want something, are you able to ask for it? | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |

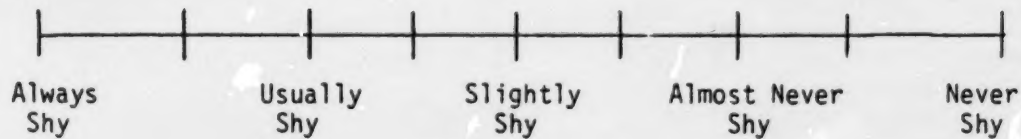
APPENDIX "B"

Name _____

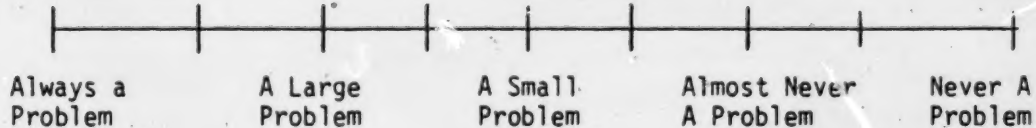
SHYNESS LINE AND SHYNESS PROBLEM LINE

Mark Where You Feel You Belong on These Lines

Are You a Shy Person?



Is Shyness a Problem For You?



APPENDIX "C"

TEACHER SHYNESS REPORT

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|-------|--------------|-----------|-------|--------|
| 1. | Is able to speak up in class. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 2. | Speaks in a low speaking voice. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 3. | Is timid in social situations. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 4. | Is able to establish eye contact with others. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 5. | Is able to initiate contact with other children. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 6. | Is able to stand up for his/her rights. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 7. | Is able to express his/her opinion freely and openly. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 8. | Is quiet in social situations. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 9. | Tends to withdraw from social contact. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 10. | Will volunteer in class. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 11. | Is shy with members of the same sex. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 12. | Is shy with adults. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |

TEACHER SHYNESS REPORT (Continued)

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------|--------------|-----------|-------|--------|
| 13. | Is hesitant to speak in social situations. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 14. | Expresses leadership when it is necessary. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 15. | Is shy with members of the opposite sex. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 16. | Is able to ask for what he/she wants. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 17. | Is able to initiate friendships. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 18. | Appears self-conscious in social situations. | Never | Almost Never | Sometimes | Often | Always |